

Kyle



WeightWatchers' Contributor

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Treadmill Jumpstarts Injury Recovery Process

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Written by [kylestack](#) on 7/1/2011 4:25 PM

The initial stages of an athlete's rehab from a leg injury can involve plenty of frustration and impatience. However, there's one machine that can initiate the rehab process without the burden of stressing the injured area. It's called Alter-G, and I won't say it's the wave of the future – it's the go-to injury rehab device of the present.

Its purpose is to enable someone recovering from a leg injury to run with the feeling of them carrying only a fraction of their weight. A clear plastic cover enveloped around the treadmill is filled with air – the degree to which is based on what percentage of a person's weight is programmed at the start of the exercise. For example, a person can choose on the device's screen to run at 40 percent of his / her weight. Air then fills the plastic chamber. That weight can be adjusted, from 100 percent to 20 percent, once the device calibrates a person's weight, which occurs by standing on the scale located on each side of the treadmill's track.



Twenty-one NBA teams, eight NFL squads and three MLB clubs employ Alter-G – the 'G' stands for gravity – in their leg injury rehab programs. This is in addition to dozens of major collegiate programs, international soccer clubs and performance enhancement centers in the U.S. The advantage to me is unmistakable: an athlete can begin building endurance and strengthen an injured area by walking, jogging and running with reduced joint stress.

Alter-G was originally built by Dr. Robert Whalen as a way for NASA's astronauts to stay in shape sans the joint stress. Once it was approved by the Food & Drug Administration in 2008, the treadmill's advantages to athletes was apparent. "We have anecdotal feedback from surgeons that they will have their patients back after orthopedic surgery walking and jogging weeks earlier than they would have otherwise," says Gabriel Griego, Alter-G's Vice President of Marketing.

Griego explains that studies are being performed to gauge Alter-G's effectiveness in recovery from an ACL reconstruction, knee replacement surgery and knee osteoarthritis. There's even a neurological study underway to see how people suffering from Parkinson's might benefit by using Alter-G. The machine's value to sports teams, though, is unlike any other workout device I've heard about. Injury rehabilitation is a training staff's chief concern. Alter-G is effective at alleviating those concerns by (safely) jumpstarting the recovery process.

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